

新以色列的召命

作為新人類的以色列

- 創世記以一個祝福貫穿整卷書的主題。
- 上帝照自己的形象創造人類，祝福他們，叫他們生養眾多，管治大地（創世記 1:27-28）。
- 及後人類墮落，以致上帝以洪水審判大地。洪水過後，人類只剩下挪亞一家，成為新的人類：上帝將那最初給全人類的祝福和呼召交付給挪亞一家，叫他們生養眾多，在地上昌盛繁茂（創世紀 9:6-8）。
- 當上帝呼召亞伯拉罕，所給予他的，仍然是一個祝福：他的子孫會多如天上的星、地上的沙，定要成為大國。
- 是以以色列人盼望上帝重返大地時，會把創世時給人類的福氣，賜給他們。也就是說，他們要成為那真正的人類。

律法與聖潔的國度

- 然而，這新人類的使命是什麼呢？
- 上帝呼召人類反映他的形象。
- 上帝對以色列國的呼召，就是要他們在遵守律法中，分別為聖，成為一個祭司的國度、聖潔的國民（出埃及記 19:3-6）。
- 是以律法從來不是以色列人與上帝討價還價的籌碼：是上帝主動把以色列人從埃及為奴之地拯救出來，也是上帝主動在恩典中與以色列人立約。反而，行律法是以色列人活出自己的身分和呼召的方法。

聖靈與那寫在心上的律法

- 可惜律法並沒有使以色列人更加聖潔。為了它們的背約，上帝使他們被擄到巴比倫。
- 在亡國的苦難中，先知盼望有一天神要藉著他的靈把律法寫在人的心中：
 1. 耶利米書 31:31-34
 2. 以西結書 11:19-20
 3. 以西結書 36:24-28
 4. 約珥書 2:28-29

Vocation of the New Israel

Israel, the New Humanity

- The stories of Genesis are tied together by one theme: God's blessing to mankind.
- God blessed his newly created humankind, that they may be fruitful and multiply in numbers (Gen 1:27-28).
- After the fall, God judged the world with the flood. Noah became the new humanity on earth: God blessed him and his family with the same blessing (Gen 9:6-8).
- When God called Abraham, it was the same blessing that was granted him: be multiply and become a great nation (Gen 12:2-3).
- Therefore, Israel hopes that, when God returns, He will grant her the blessing that were to be granted to humankind. That is, they believe that they are the true humanity.

Torah and the Holy Nation

- What then is the vocation of this new humanity.
- God called the first man to be his image bearer (Gen 1:26-29).
- God called the Israel nation to be a people of his possession, separated from the nations to become a priestly kingdom and holy nation (Exo 19:3-6).
- Torah is thus not something Israel used for negotiating a covenant relationship with God: it was because of God's initiative that they were saved from Egypt; it was because of God's gracious initiative that the covenant was established. Instead, Torah is something by which Israel live out her vocation and identity.

Holy Spirit and the New Torah

- Yet the Torah failed to sanctify Israel. Because of her disloyalty, she was exiled to the nations.
- In the midst of suffering, the prophets proclaim a day in which God, through the Spirit, would write His Torah on Israel's heart (Jer 31:31-34; Eze 11:19-20, 36:24-28; Joel 2:28-29).

教會與聖潔的新人類

- 新約不單把信徒看作上帝新創造的人類（林後 5:17; 加拉太 6:15），更重新認定，信徒作為上帝形象的呼召（歌羅西 3:10）。
- 不但這樣，新約作者一次又一次地把教會看作新的以色列：「唯有你們是被揀選的族類，是有君尊的祭司，是聖潔的國度，是屬神的子民。」（彼得前書 2:9）
- 而使這一切成為可能的，不是我們對律法的忠貞，不是我們道德的勇氣，而是聖靈每日的感化（羅馬書 7:7-8:17）。
- 而那使我們與他人有所分別的，就是在教會團契的相交中，我們彼此相愛（約翰福音 13:34-35）。這就是在新約中叫人成聖的「律法」（約翰一書 2:7-11; 加拉太 6:2。）

反省

- 新舊約聖經想要解決的問題，不單是在罪中如何逃避上帝的憤怒。反而從舊約至新約，神關心的是要在地上建立一個真正能反映自己的榮美的群體。
- 成聖不是教會在得救後可有可無的選擇。反而，它是我們被拯救的目的、是我們的身份、是我們的呼召。
- 今天我們要反問自己的卻是，是什麼叫人成聖呢？我們要抗拒法利賽人的試探，妄想律法（規矩、朋輩壓力、社會規範、等等）可以叫人成聖。
- 新約福音所宣講的，卻是聖靈賜能力的臨在，叫我們裏外更新，將我們的心轉向天父，讓我們成為新造的人，滿有基督的身量。

The Church and the Sanctified Humanity

- The New Testament not only sees the church as the recreated humanity (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), it reaffirms the vocation of man as the image bearer of God (Col 3:10).
- In addition, the NT authors see the church as the new Israel (1 Pet 2:9).
- Making this happen is neither our loyalty to Torah nor our moral strength. Rather, it is the daily presence of the Holy Spirit that sanctifies us (Rom 7:7-8:17).
- What differentiates us is that in our fellowship we practice loving one another (John 13:34-35). This is the Torah of Jesus Christ (1 Jn 2:7-11; Gal 6:2).

Reflections

- The Scripture is not solely concerned of providing a method for a sinful person to escape God's wrath. God's concern is singularly one of constituting on earth a people who reflects His glory and goodness.
- Sanctification is therefore not an option for the saved community. Instead, holiness is the object of our salvation; it is our vocation and our identity.
- What we need to keep asking ourselves is this question: *what is it that makes holy living possible?* We must resist the Pharisaic temptation of employing the law (or its many variants such as policies, rules, peer pressure and social norms) to generate holy living.
- The New Testament Gospel tells of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, who transforms us from within, turns our heart to our Heavenly Father, and creates inside us a creature in the likeness of Christ our Lord.